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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GENERAL STEPHENSON ON CIVIL WAR GENERALS

SIR,—I have recently finished reading Charles Francis Adams's *Autobiography*. It was so interesting that I read it to the last page.

His opinions of some of the generals of the war are sometimes correct and often amusing. Grant, he says, was of a coarse fibre and did not impress him with a sense of character, and he might have added that he was vindictive: any strictly impartial man would have the same opinion; but he gives Grant more credit than was due him when, in his castigation of Butler, he charges him with breaking Grant's plan of campaign.

It was Robert E. Lee, not Butler, that smashed Grant's plans.

I have always believed that if Gen. McClellan had been placed in command of the Army of the Potomac, with a force that exceeded Lee's by more than two to one, and relieved of the interference of Stanton and Halleck, he would have captured Richmond in three months; it took Grant eleven months to accomplish the task.

Gen. Charles Griffin, the last commander of the 5th Corps, fought his battery at the battle of 1st Bull Run, and at the close of the war led the corps through the streets of Richmond. One day, during the Grant campaign of 1864, in an impulse of indignation and grief at the terrible losses sustained by his division in an unsuccessful assault on the enemy's works, he said to an officer: "I am not very friendly to Gen. McClellan, but I would throw up my cap if an order should come today placing him in command of the army. I am tired and sick of receiving orders that, at such a time, our troops must attack the enemy's works. It is nothing but murder." Gen. Griffin undoubtedly expressed the feelings of a large majority of the officers of the army.

But to return to Adams' opinion of the character and ability of officers. Meade, he says, was irritable, petulant, and dyspeptic (true at times), but as commander in battle he was cool, collected, and self-poised. Warren left in him a sense of lightness; that might be true at times, but he, Adams, did not recognize, apparently, the fact that at the battles of Bull Run 2nd and Gettysburg he exhibited remarkable force and energy and the skill of a great soldier. For a wonder, Adams gives Hancock the praise that he well earned. Sheridan, he thought, "lacked character"; he might have added that he was arbitrary, vindictive, and cruel. His statements regarding "Joe" Hooker, "Dan" Butterfield, and "Dan" Sickles about hit the truth. A despicable trio!

I think he overestimated the ability of Gens. Sedgwick and Humphreys in comparison with other generals. Probably the reason for that was that they (especially Humphreys) were his personal friends.

Judged by the best standards, Gen. Adams himself had none of the qualities of inspiration and enthusiasm, or the instinct of a real soldier. It seems apparent that the duties of the march, camp, and bivouac were distasteful to him, and that his blood did not rush quickly, his heart did not throb at the thought of meeting the foe on the battlefield. He certainly showed a lack of energy when his regiment was being reduced by sickness on account of the unhealthy location of his camps, yet he made no effort to get a change of location. Surely, the son of Charles Francis Adams, the skilful and loyal Minister to the Court of St. James, could have obtained the necessary permission for a change of the location of his camp, simply for the asking.

When his regiment did leave the unhealthy camp, he obtained the necessary permission (and horses) to mount his men for scout duty, a service which requires intelligence, energy, active minds, coolness and courage, traits which the colored soldiers possessed in only a limited degree.

His regiment proved a failure, and Adams retired from the service.

I would not attempt to criticise his action during the years that followed his military career: his service as a lawyer, and especially as the head manager of the Union Pacific Railroad—which he evidently considered the greatest work of his life; but, as a soldier, I would express my admiration of the moral courage he displayed, the words of justice he spoke, in his admirable eulogy of Gen. Robert E. Lee before the Virginians at their University.

This great soldier, who was equaled only by Gen. McClellan (and possibly by George H. Thomas), among the noted Union Generals of the Civil War, for military skill, for a pure and temperate life, honesty and generous action, was well worthy of the words of praise and respect awarded him by Gen. Adams.

We may blame Gen. Lee for his disloyalty to his country, but, at the same time, the atmosphere in which he had lived, which constantly asserted the principle of "State rights," teaching him that his first duty was loyalty to his State rather than to his country, should be considered in passing judgment on his action at the beginning of the Civil War.

It would be folly to deny that if many of the soldiers who fought for the Union had been born and raised at the South and educated in Southern ideas amid Southern environment, they would have fought for the Southern Confederacy instead of in the armies of the Union.

If Gen. Adams leaves no other memories to perpetuate his name in the future, he will be honored and revered in the South for the brave and generous words he uttered in his notable address on the life and character of Gen. Robert E. Lee.

LUTHER STEPHENSON,
Brevet Brig. Gen'l, U. S. Volunteers.

HINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS.

TRAITORS

SIR,—In your editorial in the September NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW upon the execution of Sir Roger Casement as a traitor to the British Government you show that no analogy existed between Casement and General Washington.